

My name is Diane Ross and I am before you today to speak about the House Bill 33 Legislation that would call for a change of the grade bands in the state of Ohio. I taught middle school for 17 years and have taught middle level teacher candidates for 26 years. I have a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Kent State University with a cognate in Middle Childhood Education.

I am in opposition to the grade band change being changed and the removal of the middle level license. The development of this license band was in direct response to current research on the developmental needs of young adolescents. This change would be taking a step back 20 years. Adolescence is a time of significant growth and development inside the teenage brain. Current brain research has shown that adolescent brain areas associated with emotional, social, and cognitive functions appear to remain more plastic, or malleable, than other brain areas, thus rendering young people more sensitive to socioeconomic environments throughout adolescence. The cognitive, social, and emotional development from ages 3 to 13 is vast. Being prepared as a first-year teacher to meet the needs of all learners across this age range would be difficult. In the 10 years leading up to the pandemic, feelings of persistent sadness and hopelessness—as well as suicidal thoughts and behaviors—increased by about 40% among young people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Therefore, not preparing teachers with the current research and this specific knowledge would only leave young adolescents who are currently in mental health crisis in more danger.

A possible solution to the suggested struggles of placing teachers in grades 4-6 who are only dual licensed is to require those with a 4-6 license to get a 4-6 endorsement that allows them to teach

I appreciate you listening to this testimony and thank you not only for the teacher candidates I serve but for the 10-15 year old students that they serve.